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THE PREMATURE DEIFICATION OF EUMENES II

BY WILLIAM SCOTT FERGUSON

Ἑπὲρ βασιλέως Εὐμένου Φιλαδέλφου θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργέτου Δημήτριος Ποσειδωνίου.¹ This inscription once catalogued a dedication made in a small town on the Thracian coast of the Propontis, in territory which passed with Lysimachia and the Thracian Chersonese into the hands of the king of Pergamon in 188 B. C. It was at that time taken from Antiochos the Great; earlier it had belonged to Philip of Macedon who had seized it while under the protection of the Aetolian League, and it had probably formed part of the empire of the Ptolemies during the latter half of the third century B. C.²

Along with it are published two other inscriptions,³ found in the same place, which record dedications made "on behalf of King Attalos Philadelphos and Queen Stratonike." Mommsen, who first edited all three, gives no intimation that they were cut at the same time, or are in any special way to be connected with one another. Professor Dittenberger,⁴ for no assigned reason, thinks that they were inscribed simultaneously. Professor Niese seems to be of the same opinion, and of like mind are, perhaps, Professor Kornemann and M. Beurlier. But whereas Professor Dittenberger and M. Beurlier⁵ assign them to 172 B. C., the others date them after the death of Eumenes in 159 B. C.⁶

It must be granted that general probability is in favor of the view that they all belong to the same dedication or set of dedications, but of this no proof whatever is attainable. Let us, therefore, consider the first apart from the others. ὑπὲρ is a very common preposition in dedications of this kind. It occurs in

¹ Dittenberger *Orientalis Graeci inscriptiones selectae* I. 302.

² Mommsen *Hermes* IX (1875), p. 117; Niese *Gesch. d. griech. u. maked. Staaten* II, pp. 150, 581, 588, 668, 760; Beloch *Griech. Gesch.* III. 2, pp. 279f.

³ Dittenberger *ibid.* I. 303, 304.

⁴ I. 302, n. 2.

⁵ *De divinis honoribus quos acceperunt Alexander et successores eius* (Paris, 1890), p. 104, n. 2.

⁶ *Beitr. alt. Gesch.* I, p. 86, n. 1; Niese *op. cit.* III, p. 204, n. 2.

hundreds of inscriptions from the earliest to the latest times. Nowhere, so far as I have been able to discover, is it used to connect a dedication with other than a living person. It lies in the nature of the word that this is so; for *ὑπέρ*, with its notion of helping one along, must have struck a new-fledged god—and no other came ordinarily into account—as impertinent, nay almost blasphemous. The language had other modes of expressing the conferment of an honor upon the dead. Professor Dittenberger¹ too knows of no use of *ὑπέρ* in the case of a dedication to one deceased.

On the other hand, in an Attalid inscription *θεοῦ* invariably denotes the death and deification of the monarch.² Absolutely no exception to this usage is extant, the reason being that no Attalid became a god during his lifetime. This was a point upon which the rulers of Pergamon insisted, and it served to distinguish them from other less democratic³ or less modest dynasties. That a Pergamean city should violate this well-understood principle is inconceivable. Death in the palace at Pergamon, however, was simply a change from humanity to godhood, and thereafter the title *θεός* was solemnly bestowed upon the late king.⁴ Henceforth it could not be omitted without offense.

How to explain the entirely abnormal collocation of *ὑπέρ* and *θεοῦ*—that is our problem. At first it occurred to me that it might be due to the fact that the Thracian Chersonese was earlier under the rule of the Ptolemies and Seleucids, who were regularly deified during their lifetime. But on further reflection this solution of the difficulty proved unacceptable, for I could not believe that any man would be so stupid as knowingly to use in this connection a mode of speech interdicted by his sovereign for sixteen years or more. Nor, on the other hand, was a plea of ignorance admis-

¹ *Op. cit.* I, p. 365, n. 3; p. 648.

² Kornemann *loc. cit.*, pp. 85 ff.

³ The republican spirit of the Attalids appears elsewhere; e. g., in the avoidance of the royal "we" (R. Laqueur *Quaestiones epigraphicae et papyrologicae selectae*, Argentorati, 1904, pp. 100 ff.; cf. Dittenberger *op. cit.* II, p. 550, and, for the usage of the Seleucids, I. 231 along with 232), and in the assumption in Boeotia of the citizen-title *Περγαμεύς* (Dittenberger *op. cit.* I, pp. 655 ff.). The Attalids never engraved their likenesses upon the coins they issued. Cf. Imhoof-Blumer *Abh. d. Berl. Akad.* (1884) III. Their position in the state was not unlike that of Augustus.

⁴ Beurlier *op. cit.*, p. 104 and Kornemann *loc. cit.*, pp. 88 f.

sible, since the two inscriptions already referred to, which are quite or almost contemporary, proved that the natives of this particular town knew the Attalid usage. And if these were discarded, as being possibly later, it was still incredible that a subject, interested enough to make open profession of his devotion, should have falsely imagined his ruler to be a god. A sharp distinction between king and gods¹ in the ritual employed every month, the lack of a personal temple and altar, no regular sacrifices, no tithes! This spoke louder than many proclamations, and what it meant was obvious.

The inscription is noteworthy in two other particulars: (1) Granting that Eumenes was alive at the time it was set up, his wife, Queen Stratonike, should have been included. (2) Apart from a suspicious passage in a very careless author, Stephanos of Byzantium, there is no case known in which the title Philadelphos is attached to the name of Eumenes. Philadelphos is the crown name of his brother and successor Attalos II.²

How are we to explain all of these peculiarities? We must recall a curious incident in the family history of the Attalids. In 172 B. C. Eumenes, while approaching Delphi on his way back from Rome, was set upon by robbers and so badly injured that for quite a time his life was in danger. He was conveyed to Corinth and then to his own island of Aegina, but his case was too serious for any definite information to be published. During his absence Attalos had been regent. Attalos, upon receiving a report, which circulated throughout the entire country, that Eumenes was dead, at once seized the crown and married the widow, Stratonike. The dead king was no doubt deified, and we may conjecture that Attalos had him dubbed "the god who loves his brother." Then came word that Eumenes was alive and recovering.

The situation was, to say the least, embarrassing. Who was king? Eumenes was officially dead and deified. Attalos was regularly crowned and in possession of power. Stratonike had

¹ The distinction between heroic and divine honors—that drawn by Augustus between his father and himself—was obvious in daily worship (Kornemann *loc. cit.*, pp. 86 ff.).

² Mommsen *Hermes* IX (1875), p. 118.

been childless for over sixteen years; she now became pregnant, and, in due course, bore a son whom Eumenes, according to Polybius,¹ had not acknowledged at least five years later, but who subsequently succeeded his legal uncle, Attalos II, as Attalos III. Some time must have elapsed before it became clear that Attalos had abdicated, and that Eumenes had pardoned him and received back his throne and wife.

At this and at no other time can our inscription have been inscribed. And the other two were, perhaps, set up at the same moment; but of this there is no necessity, since upon the death of Eumenes, thirteen years later, Attalos again married Stratonike. Hence a dedication "on behalf of King Attalos Philadelphos and queen Stratonike" could then have been made at any time.

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¹The purport of Polybius' remark (xxx. 2) was first perceived by F. Koepp (*Rhein. Mus.* XLVIII (1893), pp. 154 ff.). His interpretation was contested by Niese (*Gesch. d. griech. u. maked. Staaten* III, p. 204, n. 4), but, as we now see, rightly defended by Dittenberger (*op. cit.* I, pp. 656 ff.).